

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF INDIANA
INDIANAPOLIS DIVISION

TOMMIE SHELTON,)
)
)
Plaintiff,) No. 1:20-cv-02447-JPH-DML
)
)
v.)
)
)
FLOYD,)
FOX,)
BRYANT,)
LOWREY,)
)
Defendants.)

Entry Dismissing Complaint for Lack of Jurisdiction and Directing Plaintiff to Show Cause

Plaintiff Tommie Shelton, an inmate at Plainfield Correctional Facility, has sued four correctional officials. Shelton alleges that his personal property has gone missing or was destroyed. He asserts that the value of his lost property is \$350.00 and that he seeks an additional \$850.00 to compensate him for his "time and troubles having to deal without the past 2 years." Dkt. 1 at p. 5.

I. Jurisdiction

"[C]ourts . . . have an independent obligation to determine whether subject-matter jurisdiction exists, even in the absence of a challenge from any party." *Arbaugh v. Y&H Corp.*, 546 U.S. 500, 514 (2006). "When a federal court concludes that it lacks subject-matter jurisdiction, the court must dismiss the complaint in its entirety." *Id.* The Supreme Court has explained:

The basic statutory grants of federal-court subject-matter jurisdiction are contained in 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331 and 1332. Section 1331 provides for "[f]ederal-question" jurisdiction, § 1332 for "[d]iversity of citizenship" jurisdiction. A plaintiff properly invokes § 1331 jurisdiction when she pleads a colorable claim "arising under" the Constitution or laws of the United States. See *Bell v. Hood*, 327 U.S. 678, 681–685, 66 S.Ct. 773, 90 L.Ed. 939 (1946). She invokes § 1332 jurisdiction when she presents a claim between parties of diverse citizenship that exceeds the required jurisdictional amount, currently \$75,000. See § 1332(a).

Id. at 513 (internal footnote omitted). Further, the Court of Appeals has repeatedly held that "the party invoking federal jurisdiction bears the burden of demonstrating its existence." *See Hart v. FedEx Ground Pkg. Sys. Inc.*, 457 F.3d 675, 679 (7th Cir. 2006).

Here, there is no allegation of conduct which could support the existence of federal question jurisdiction. *See Williams v. Aztar Ind. Gaming Corp.*, 351 F.3d 294, 298 (7th Cir. 2003) (explaining federal courts may exercise federal-question jurisdiction when a plaintiff's right to relief is created by or depends on a federal statute or constitutional provision). To state a claim for relief under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, a plaintiff must allege that he or she was deprived of a right secured by the Constitution or the laws of the United States, and that this deprivation occurred at the hands of a person or persons acting under the color of state law. *D.S. v. E. Porter Cty. Sch. Corp.*, 799 F.3d 793, 798 (7th Cir. 2015) (citing *Buchanan–Moore v. Cty. of Milwaukee*, 570 F.3d 824, 827 (7th Cir. 2009)).

The Fifth Amendment states "[n]o person shall be . . . deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law." U.S. Const. amend. V. The Fourteenth Amendment provides that state officials shall not "deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law." U.S. Const. amend. XIV. However, a state tort claims act that provides a method by which a person can seek reimbursement for the negligent loss or intentional deprivation of property meets the requirements of the due process clause by providing due process of law. *Hudson v. Palmer*, 468 U.S. 517, 533 (1984) ("For intentional, as for negligent deprivations of property by state employees, the state's action is not complete until and unless it provides or refuses to provide a suitable post deprivation remedy."). *See also Knick v. Twp. of Scott, Pennsylvania*, 139 S. Ct. 2162, 2174 (2019) ("It is not even possible for a State to provide pre-deprivation due process for the unauthorized act of a single employee." *Id.* (citing *Parratt v. Taylor*, 451 U.S. 527 (1981))).

Indiana's Tort Claims Act (IND. CODE § 34-13-3-1 et seq.) provides for state judicial review of property losses caused by government employees and provides an adequate post-deprivation remedy to redress state officials' accidental or intentional deprivation of a person's property. *Wynn v. Southward*, 251 F.3d 588, 593 (7th Cir. 2001) ("Wynn has an adequate post-deprivation remedy in the Indiana Tort Claims Act, and no more process was due."); *Zinerman v. Burch*, 494 U.S. 113, 125-26 (1990) ("Deprivation of a constitutionally protected interest in 'life, liberty, or property' is not in itself unconstitutional; what is unconstitutional is the deprivation of such an interest without due process of law The constitutional violation actionable under § 1983 is not complete when the deprivation occurs; it is not complete unless and until the State fails to provide due process."). Because the plaintiff has an adequate state law remedy, the alleged deprivation of his property was not a constitutional violation.

Similarly, there is no allegation of diversity of citizenship. *See Denlinger v. Brennan*, 87 F.3d 214, 217 (7th Cir. 1996) (holding that failure to include allegations of citizenship requires dismissal of complaint based on diversity jurisdiction). Nor is the amount in controversy sufficient to satisfy the amount in controversy requirement of diversity jurisdiction.

II. Dismissal of Complaint and Opportunity to Show Cause

When it is determined that a court lacks jurisdiction, its only course of action is to announce that fact and dismiss the case. *Steel Co. v. Citizens for a Better Environment*, 523 U.S. 83, 94 (1998) ("Jurisdiction is power to declare the law, and when it ceases to exist, the only function remaining to the court is that of announcing the fact and dismissing the cause.") (*quoting Ex parte McCardle*, 7 Wall, 506, 514, 19 L.Ed. 264 (1868)). That is the case here. The complaint fails to contain a legally viable claim over which this Court could exercise subject matter jurisdiction and the complaint is therefore **dismissed** for lack of jurisdiction.

The plaintiff shall have **through December 28, 2020**, in which to show cause why judgment consistent with this Entry should not Enter. Failure to respond to this Entry will result in the dismissal of this action for the reason discussed, without further notice. Nothing in this Entry prevents the plaintiff from pursuing his state law claim against the defendants in state court.

SO ORDERED.

Date: 12/3/2020

James Patrick Hanlon

James Patrick Hanlon
United States District Judge
Southern District of Indiana

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